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ABSTRACT

The model of the family as a set of contingent careers is brought into focus by Wilbert Moore's suggestions that in schedule synchronization the family takes priority in claiming time, the wife-mother asserts such claims and arranges the schedule, and common leisure activities symbolize the solidarity of the unit. The perception of parents of the conflicts and schedule changes introduced by one time-demanding role of a child, participation in competitive swimming, provides a measure of schedule priorities and management. Moore is partly supported in the centrality of the mother in the process, but not the priority of family activity and symbolic "togetherness." The central activities of family leisure--eating and going out together--give way to the exterior, performance-oriented childrens' sport requirements. Family nonwork schedules are found to be quite variable. (Author)

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SYNCHRONIZATION OF LEISURE CONFLICTS IN THE FAMILY SCHEDULE

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The model of the family as a "set of mutually contingent careers" (Farber, 1964) presents the problem of the coordination of those careers. Such careers involve taking roles in various social institutions that have schedule requirements. External schedule requirements and common activity in the family must be synchronized, especially when some family members are not independently mobile.

Wilbert Moore has proposed this synchronization of family schedules and the interrelationship of familial and other timetables as a key to investigating family priorities and interaction (1963). For the family to do anything together--eating, playing, or working--requires time synchronization. Work, school, community organizations, sports, church, retail stores, and other social enterprises have operations schedules. Functioning as workers, students, members, players, and consumers requires some articulation of the family schedules with those of the institutions. The dependence of American communities on private transportation for both work and leisure intensifies the synchronization problems.

Schedules are daily, weekly, monthly, seasonal, and yearly. Role requirements vary from time to time and with the degrees of integration into the social organizations. Each person takes a number of roles that together have a dynamic structure.

Schedule Synchronization

Moore makes a number of suggestions about the shape of that schedule as it relates to the family. Among those that would seem to be most amenable to testing are the following four:

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1. "The family is the first and virtually preclusive claimant on time in the family life cycle" (1963:69). The primacy of family role requirements may be examined by measuring to what extent new requirements alter the family schedule.

2. The family's "bargaining position" has been improved by the provision of home entertainment and especially television. The disruption of home entertainment by a new role requirement may be investigated.

3. The wife-mother is the one who tends to "assert familial claims on discretionary time and to assign and rearrange the use of the current temporal inventory" (1963:76). The centrality of the mother as schedule-keeper and synchronizer may be examined.

4. Moore refers to the symbolic meaning of common activity for the family. Eating together symbolizes the "togetherness" of the family as do other mutual activities. However, the social value of performance and accomplishment is also significant in deciding family priorities. The adjustment of schedules may provide a way to measure relative salience as some activities are displaced by others.

Testing the propositions that Moore has developed requires a common stimulus or change factor. While longitudinal and comprehensive research would be preferable, some exploration of the issues should be possible in a limited time frame. The fragility or durability of the family schedule may be exposed by the challenge of a demanding activity. The relative flexibility of some schedule items and inflexibility of others requires adjustment following some participation decisions.

The introduction of one seasonally-demanding relationship may reveal priorities and also the nature of the synchronization process. The coordinator role may be taken by one family member or shared. Variability of the schedule may

suggest relative value placed on certain roles and activities and may also reveal a process of bargaining within the family. Schedule conflict may provide a measure of value priorities and a battleground of relative power.

Nonwork Roles and Contingent Careers

The contingent career model of the family focuses attention on changing role requirements through the family life cycle (Farber, 1964). For example, the career of the child adds dramatic new requirements on becoming a public school student. The new role affects the coordination of all the contingent careers of the family.

In much the same way, the addition of one rigidly-scheduled role into the family timetable may affect many other roles of family members. The perception of mild or drastic change by those defining their situation is one measure of the rigidity or malleability of the family schedule. If one specific new relationship can significantly alter the timetable, then the dynamic nature of the schedule would be demonstrated. The schedule would have to be approached as a negotiated process as leisure styles change through the family life cycle (Kelly, 1974, 1975).

Leisure is usually defined as activity distinguished from employment and discretionary in being relatively free from requirement (Kelly, 1972). Study of schedule prediction has found nonwork or leisure to be the life-space most subject to alteration by contingency (Bull, 1972). Leisure, then, would appear to be the element of the family schedule most subject to change by synchronization requirements.

However, it is conceivable that a leisure requirement might exert measurable change on the family schedule. Activities central to the "togetherness" of the family might give way because they are more flexible. If so, then the leisure careers of family members would be independent variables in the analysis of family patterns. Or, more in accord with Farber's model, leisure roles and careers would be elements in the synchronization process that shape the family schedule. Leisure roles might take priority rather than be "determined" by the primary institution.

Aims of the Study

The general aim of the study reported here, then, is to examine the possibility of the requirements of a leisure role changing the schedule of a primary social institution, the family. Leisure careers would be viewed as significant among those "contingent careers" that make up the family.

More specifically, propositions made by Moore as to the centrality of family claims and bargaining position, the mother as coordinator, and the meaning of common family activity will be investigated.

Finally, implications for both family and leisure research will be drawn from the findings.

I. The Research Design

How do parents perceive the effect on the family of the addition of one highly-scheduled activity? No activity of children and youth is more tightly and comprehensively scheduled than competitive swimming. Further, the activity is seasonal with breaks in the schedule in both late summer and early fall and in the spring. Therefore, it would appear possible that those involved in the schedule synchronization might be able to gauge the effects of that single activity.

Questionnaires were developed to probe the perception of change due to swimming on the part of each parent. They were mailed with an explanatory letter and followed up with a card two weeks later. Return rate was 70 percent by families.

Four teams in the Eugene, Oregon, area were selected due to the accessibility of family lists. One large city team has a highly competitive program. A smaller YMCA team is limited in size and strength. A satellite industrial city has a large and inclusive municipal team with increasing emphasis on winning. A park district team is middle-range in size and competition level. The satellite and park district team draw from predominately blue-collar and routine white-collar

neighborhoods. The four may be considered generally representative of West Coast age-group swim teams.

Because of the high proportion of responses from both husband and wife, it was decided to use the data to test further the relation of husband and wife perceptions. Much family research has been based on data obtained from the wife alone (Blood and Wolfe, 1960). The adequacy of such data has frequently been questioned, but the issue left unresolved (Straus, 1964; Scanzoni, 1965). Comparison of husband-wife perceptions on this self-administered questionnaire includes both items of information about the family schedule and items of evaluation. Therefore, only the 92 pairs of responses are used in this study.

Coding was done after a preliminary survey of the responses. Then, the data was analysed using the Fastmarg and Crosstabs programs of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

II. Findings

1. Characteristics of the sample:

Competition swimming has been labeled as a white, middle-class sport. The teams studied here, despite the inclusion of two teams in working-class areas do not refute the allegation.

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Table 1 About Here

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There is no way of determining the representativeness of this group. Those of higher education level are probably somewhat over-represented in relation to the four teams. General observation would support the stereotype of the parents of age-group swimmers as tending to be white, middle-class, and college-educated with incomes high enough to permit some discretionary use.

2. Who resolves schedule conflicts?

The power to make such decisions may belong to the mother, be delegated by the father, or be shared. However, it is clear that the father does not undertake the schedule synchronization job himself. The parents in this study see it as shared or as the responsibility of the mother.

*** Who always or usually resolves the schedule conflicts?

	Father	Mother	Shared
According to the mother:	6% (5)	40% (36)	54% (48)
According to the father:	2% (2)	44% (39)	54% (48)

Even if it may be assumed that "shared" is the more acceptable answer, the perspective of the mother as coordinator in at least 40 percent of the families and as sharing coordination in almost all the rest partly supports Moore's suggestion. A related factor is whether or not the mother works outside the home. Fifty-four percent of the mothers who do not work always or usually coordinate the schedule. In the forty-five percent of the families with mothers working, the proportion who share schedule coordination rises to 70 percent.

Sharing is more frequently found in schedule coordination than is assignment to the mother, especially if the mother is employed. However, the crucial nature of transportation clouds the issue somewhat.

Transportation to swim practices is usually in a family car for 56 percent of the families and a car pool in 30 percent more. The mother is the usual driver in 52 percent of the families, the father in only 10 percent, and driving is shared by the parents in 22 percent. The mother would appear to be the primary driver more frequently than she takes full responsibility for the schedule. Therefore, the 40 percent of families in which the mother is seen as the sole coordinator may be somewhat lower than day-to-day observation of decision-making would support.

3. How variable are the family schedules?

Since the mothers are almost always involved in the reconciliation of schedule conflicts, the perception of the mother is used to measure the consciousness of required alterations. In swimming schedules, the teams practice at least once a day during the week. Some practice on weekends and others do not. Meets are held on weekends and sometimes require a two-day trip.

The four teams studied here have a variety of schedules for practices. Sixty-two percent of the swimmers have only one practice on weekdays. Half have no weekend practices and thirty-one percent have one. The survey was taken during the period when "important" weekend meets were being held at least twice a month.

What does this kind of schedule for one or more children do to the family schedule? Are "togetherness" activities disrupted? The parents were asked about several kinds of family schedule items for weekdays and weekends. They were also asked about the postponement of weekend events.

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Table 2 About Here)

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The perception of change in family meals is especially high. Swim practices are frequently during common meal hours at times when casual swimmers do not want to use the pools. When other members of the family also have scheduled events after school or work and in the evening, the meal together may be lost or rushed. On weekends the change is perceived greatest in family outings and home projects. Mothers tend to be quite aware of the disruption of scheduled household tasks. Fathers were more likely than mothers to note that other sports were postponed until the end of the swim season.

The main finding is that the family activities most central to common life and most symbolic of the unity of the family are drastically altered by this one scheduled activity. Over 30 percent of the weekend activities replaced were considered

"family activities." The family schedule is found to be quite variable and the claims of the family and the home negotiable when challenged by a performance activity of a child. This change is seasonal rather than permanent and is related to the age of children. Further, the activity is discretionary in that there is no school pressure to swim on an AAU team. The family schedule disruption is chosen and temporary.

The results of this kind of schedule alteration are understood to have some effect on the family. The parents were asked if they found their child(ren)'s participation to be unifying or divisive for the family. The results follow:

*** Is age-group swimming cohesive or divisive for your family?

Father -	Unifying:	42%	Mixed:	52%	Divisive:	7%
Mother -	Unifying:	36%	Mixed:	56%	Divisive:	8%

Countering the divisive effects of the schedule are joint attendance at meets, the common focus of interest on the swimming, and even the required consultation of those parents who share the synchronization process. However, far and away the greatest negative aspect of age-group swimming, according to both parents, is that it is time-consuming and tiring for the swimmer.

4. Do the parents agree on their perception of the effects of the swim team schedule?

The Proportional Reduction of Error interpretation of the associational statistic Gamma permits it to be used to compare correspondence of arrays (Costner, 1965). It is sensitive to differences in order for ordinal data. For comparison, items with a Gamma correspondence of .700 or higher are considered to be a high agreement. Gamma scores of .400 to .699 are considered medium and below .400 to be low. Gammas were statistically significant according to Chi Square down to .200.

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Table 3 About Here)

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In general, agreement is relatively high on items of joint participation and of a simple "Who does it?" nature. Agreement is low on items such as TV watching and items of evaluation that are not joint and do not require agreement between the parents. While agreement may be high enough on simple schedule items to rely on the more central parent, neither parent gives reliable information on the independent schedule of the other or on matters of interpretation or evaluation.

5. Significant family characteristics

Crosstabulations related the family background variables (Table 1) to items of schedule such as perception of conflicts for the swimmers or the parents, who drives to practices, displacement of weekend outings, perception of family cohesion or division due to swimming, who attends meets, and how schedule conflicts are resolved. There were almost no significant relationships found as measured by Chi Square.

Higher education and employment of the mother were related to a higher likelihood of shared conflict resolution. Other family and parental background characteristics were not found to be related to any of the scheduling items.

Crosstabulations were also run between schedule conflicts and several variables in the swimming schedule such as transportation time, number of years in competition swimming, other activities of swimmers, and the number of swim practices a day and on weekends. Swimmers who were older and had been swimming longer were perceived by the parents to have more conflicts in their schedules. No other significant and clear relationships were found with perception of change, schedule conflict, and effects on the family.

III. Implications for Family and Leisure Research

A. Implications for family research:

1. Moore's suggestion that the mother is the primary coordinator of the family schedule is supported in part. About 40 percent of the mothers always or

usually resolved schedule conflicts and most of the rest shared such resolution with their husbands. The only two fathers who saw themselves as the coordinator had working wives whose schedules kept them away at the time of most swim practices.

2. On the other hand, the primacy of the family's claims on the time and schedule was not supported. Such central activities as eating together, kin visiting, home projects, religious participation, and family outings frequently gave way in season to the schedule of the swim team. The participation of a child in one activity may significantly alter the entire family leisure schedule for a period of time. Therefore, it would seem that families with school-age children may not have a schedule at all, but rather a scheme of shifting priorities that is subject to change.

3. The contingent careers of family members in the period with school-age children at home would be combined into a family schedule with the careers of children as one independent variable. Further, a leisure activity (in the sense of being nonwork and nonschool) may temporarily become a major determinant of the family schedule if valued highly and if it is less flexible than family activities.

4. The parents' agreement on the perception of schedule-change items varied. It was high on matters of joint participation or that require coordination, but much lower on items of independent participation or of evaluation. The use of "mother-only" data is not consistently reliable as "parental perception" on all kinds of schedule items.

B. Implications for Leisure Research:

1. Further support is given for approaches that take into account the integration of family and leisure roles. The household or family would seem to be a proper focus for research into the effect of leisure on other institutional roles and relationships. Also, the primacy of family over leisure roles cannot be taken for granted.

2. In the family schedule, the leisure schedule is more than residual. Rather, the synchronization process would appear to be situational in being subject to change from season to season and from day to day. One highly-scheduled activity may alter many activities considered central to the family and its cohesion. When an activity requires a rigid schedule for common participation, the more flexible family schedule may be altered. The decision process of schedule articulation is a significant focus for exploring the place of leisure in life patterns.

3. Leisure may be an independent variable in relation to family patterns. The common question of fitting leisure into the family may obscure the equally-possible option of having to fit the family schedule into leisure requirements. The salience of leisure roles and the leisure careers of children in relation to family, community, residence, and religious choices would seem to be worth further exploration.

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Table 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

A. Children:

Number at home: 1: 7% (6) 2: 35% (32) 3-4: 46% (42) 5+: 12% (11)

Number swimming: 1: 54% (50) More than 1, but not all: 20% (18)
All at home: 26% (24)

Largest number of years in competition swimming: 1: 34% (31) 2-3: 27% (24) 4 plus: 39% (35)

In two or more other activities: 86% (77)

B. Parents:

Father's occupation: Blue-collar: 22% (20), White-collar: 31% (28)
Professional or managerial: 47% (42)

Mother's occupation: Not employed: 55% (50), Blue-collar: 7% (6)
White-collar: 25% (23), Professional or managerial: 13% (12)

Education level:	Father	Mother
High school degree or less	35% (32)	32% (29)
Some college, with or without degree	35% (32)	64% (58)
Advanced degree	30% (28)	3% (3)

Religion: Consider selves "regular" in participation
Father: 50% (46)
Mother: 65% (59)

92% own their own home
90% own two or more cars

Table 2

PERCEIVED CHANGE IN FAMILY SCHEDULES ON WEEKDAYS AND WEEKENDS

A. According to the Mother, how is the family schedule changed due to the swimming schedule? (Some or considerable change)

	On Weekdays:	On Weekends:
Meals	88%	63%
Organizations	57%	60%
Sleep	31%	53%
Television	37%	54%
Household tasks	70%	63%
Family outings		87%
Visiting other families		49%
Religious participation		60%
Home projects		57%

B. According to the Mother, what kind of events are commonly postponed due to the swimming schedule?

	Postponed to Free Weekends	Until After the Season
Vacation trips	42%	48%
Weekend outings	77%	65%
Other sports	40%	35%
Projects	58%	33%
Entertaining	50%	25%

(N = 92 family units)

Table 3

AGREEMENT BETWEEN FATHER AND MOTHER ON FAMILY SCHEDULE

** = Chi square P < .01 * = Chi square P < .05

	Item	Gamma
High Agreement		
	Father's meet attendance	.876**
	Want swimmers to continue	.857**
	Postpone entertaining for season	.860**
	Postpone weekend outings for season	.824**
	Postpone outings to free weekends	.808**
	Mother's meet attendance	.794**
	Change in religious participation	.757**
	Kind of activity replaced	.752**
	Change vacation trips - weekends	.750**
	Change vacation trips - season	.714**
	Who drives to practices	.713**
Medium Agreement		
	Swimming cohesive or divisive	.670**
	Change in weekend projects	.649**
	Want younger children to swim	.686**
	Change in weekday meals	.638**
	Change in weekend outings	.627**
	Conflicts for swimmers	.594**
	Postpone entertaining - weekends	.587**
	Postpone home projects - season	.583**
	Postpone family visiting - weekends	.577**
	Change in weekday sleep schedule	.571**
	Total change - weekdays	.520**
	Total change - weekends	.516**
	Change in weekday organizations	.464**
	Meet attendance by one parent	.456**
	Change in weekend meals	.449
	Change in weekend sleep schedule	.414**
Low Agreement		
	Change in weekend tasks	.345*
	How team schedule might be changed	.328*
	Change in weekend TV schedule	.327**
	Postpone home projects - weekends	.325
	Change in weekend organizations	.310
	Postpone other sports - weekends	.310
	Postpone other sports - season	.299
	Change in weekday TV schedule	.220
	Who resolves schedule conflicts	.172**
	Change in weekday tasks	.163*
	Conflicts for parents	.108
	Look forward to future without swimming	.037